

/23 cont. /

584 is considered a mortal insult; /24/ in this case abduction is con-
583 sidered the only way of satisfying one's injured self-esteem. But
584 usually marriage negotiations are conducted in Abkhazia by
female matchmakers or by intermediaries. If they bring the
matter to a happy conclusion, their labors are rewarded with the
[465] heads and hides of the oxen that are butchered for the wedding.
As soon as a mutual understanding has been reached, the bride
and groom, after an exchange of presents, set a day for a meeting.

At the designated time, the groom and his friends set out,
with presents, for the house of the parents of the bride. A
[583] princely groom sometimes brings as many as 20 or 30 horses,
of which many are saddled. Now a feast is held at the groom's
[574] expense. During the banquet the friends of the groom, on the
one hand, and those invited by the bride's parents, on the
other, try in all possible ways to outdo each other in witticisms,
puns, eloquence, in the amount of wine consumed, in singing,
etc. The next day the comrades of the groom receive various
presents and the groom himself receives a horse, or money and
arms. Then the comrades return home, while the son-in-law
remains in the house of the bride's parents with his delegate
(dade).

But the future son-in-law still feels extremely ill at ease.
According to the custom of the country, he may not yet show
himself to the parents of the bride or their relatives. He is
wrapped in a burka, and his head and face are wrapped in a
bashlyk, under which only his eyes are barely visible. On the
first night, during the feast, he hides himself somewhere out-
side and spends the night in a neighboring house. On the next
day he is forcibly taken to the bride's house. But even now he
does not dare to sit down and remains standing by the door,
leaving it to his delegate to speak for him. In general it is not
proper for the young son-in-law to eat with his parents-in-law,
[606] or sometimes even to sit down with them at the table. In
some places, husband and wife never appear together before the
wife's parents. This is considered shameful.

The bride takes up residence in a small house (amhara).